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FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

IN

MASSACHUSETTS

A BASIC GUIDE

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A BASIC GUIDE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN MASSACHUSETTS

PREPARED BY

THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN LANGUAGES
FOR
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
MAY, 1961

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FOREWORD

The Massachusetts Advisory Committee on Foreign Languages undertook the preparation of this preliminary bulletin in the Fall of 1959. This work has taken place at a time when curriculum revision and expansion have been carried on at an increasingly significant rate. In order to develop defensible programs and answer certain basic and frequently asked questions, the Department of Education called on its Advisory Committee for assistance in furnishing guidance for the educators of our Commonwealth.

Our tradition of, and legal provision for, local control of education is best carried out in practice, not through imitation of one's neighbors, but by striving to find the best answers to the important questions. The Committee examined in comprehensive fashion inquiries such as the following: Why study foreign languages? Who should study foreign languages? By whom should foreign languages be taught? When and where should they be studied? Which foreign languages should be offered? How should foreign languages be studied and taught? These questions are treated directly and concisely by a group which we believe is representative of all levels of instruction. Additionally, a wide variety of special language interests are represented as well as both public and non-public institutions.

It is our hope that this publication may serve as a guideline in the development of more effective foreign language programs.

Owen B. Kiernan
Commissioner of Education

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WHY STUDY FOREIGN LANGUAGES?

The study of a foreign language, like that of most other basic disciplines, is a progressive experience involving the development of skills, understandings, attitudes and appreciations.

The student's direct contact with the phenomena of language enlarges his horizon through the introduction to a new medium of communication and a new culture pattern; it helps him, through an understanding of language structure, to become more articulate in his own language; it adds to his sense of pleasurable achievement; it enables him to penetrate the rich areas of learning and experience lying beyond communication in his native tongue, and to experience directly a different culture in terms of the spoken and written symbols with which the latter uniquely reveals itself.

Foreign language learning enables the young learner who lives in a multilingual world to overcome his monolingual limitations and to adjust to America's new role on the contemporary scene. This is not only an urgent necessity in our shrinking world with its rapid growth in international communications, international science, and international business, but also a primary social and intellectual need as people from all over the earth come into more frequent contact, whether for business, travel, and military service or for student and teaching exchange programs.

Hence, in every foreign language program, the general aims should be:

1. to enable the student to communicate effectively in the foreign language.
2. to help the student acquire a deepening knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of another people's language and culture.
3. to develop in the student an awareness of the relation between his own language and civilization and those of another country, and, as a consequence, a better perspective on American culture and a more enlightened attitude as an American citizen.

In order to attain these general objectives, certain specific linguistic aims should be followed. These will vary between the classical and the modern languages.

For the *classical languages,* the primary linguistic objectives should be:

1. to read classical authors in the original with comprehension and appreciation.
2. to express the thought of the original text in correspondingly good English.
3. to acquire a knowledge of word stems and patterns which are basic to a large part of the English language.

4. to write, using the authentic patterns of the classical language.

For the *modern languages,* the primary linguistic objectives should be:

1. to understand the language as it is spoken by native speakers without reference to English.
2. to speak the language in a manner acceptable to natives.
3. to read literary texts, newspapers, and magazines without conscious translation.
4. to write, using the authentic patterns of the foreign language.

In the words of former Secretary of State Christian A. Herter, "Foreign Language training is bound to promote international good will and understanding, benefit United States objectives, and be a source of great enjoyment and satisfaction to the individuals themselves who participate."

Who Shall Study Foreign Languages?

Everyone should have the opportunity to study a foreign language at some stage in his educational experience. He should be allowed to continue as long as his abilities and interests warrant.

It is better for a student to study one foreign language until he has achieved a high degree of proficiency than to study two or more languages for a shorter period of time. Those students, however, who have demonstrated success in their study of one foreign language should be encouraged to add the study of a second language to their program.

By Whom Should Foreign Languages Be Taught?

Teachers of modern foreign languages—at whatever level they may teach—must demonstrate competency in the seven areas as defined by the Modern Language Association of America: aural understanding, speaking, reading, writing, language analysis, culture, and professional preparation. (See the statement prepared in 1955 by the Steering Committee of the Foreign Language Program of the MLA in Appendix A.) In no case should teachers have less than the minimal skill in any of these seven areas.

Teachers of the classical languages should have comparable competency in the five areas of reading, writing, language analysis, culture, and professional preparation. For those who prefer the "structural" approach, emphasizing oral patterns, competency in all seven areas should be demonstrated.

When and Where Should Foreign Languages Be Studied?

While every student should have an opportunity to study a foreign language at some stage in his educational career, the particular level at

which he begins that study depends largely on the availability of properly qualified teachers in the community, his individual aptitudes in the various areas of language learning, and local economic conditions. At whatever level language study is begun, it is imperative to have an uninterrupted sequence through the twelfth grade in order to obtain a high level of proficiency in the language and literature.

Foreign language teachers are agreed that the optimum time to start learning a modern language is in the elementary school, preferably not later than grade three. Children at that level tend to be free from inhibitions. They are generally not embarrassed by repeating foreign language sounds. Most young learners hear new sounds, imitate them easily, and discover that they can use them in talking to their classmates; they accept and use new expressions without feeling a strong urge to take them apart and compare them word for word with the mother tongue. Particularly in the early stages, daily contact with the foreign language is desirable, with periods lasting as little as fifteen minutes for younger children and gradually lengthening to thirty minutes at the upper elementary level.

In those school systems which find it difficult to introduce modern foreign language study at elementary school level, students should begin such study not later than the seventh grade and follow a continuous program in that language through the twelfth. A second foreign language may well be started at ninth grade level by able students who have had success in a first foreign language.

If local circumstances necessitate postponing foreign language learning to as late as the ninth grade, a minimum program of four years in the first foreign language should be assured.

In college, students should be encouraged to continue the language which they have studied in grade twelve, in order to reap the harvest of its literature and culture. They may start to learn other foreign languages during their college days to satisfy their interests or career needs.

Which Languages Should Be Offered?

Given the availability of competent teachers and continuity of study, any foreign language may be beneficial to the student. The choice of a language to be offered, modern or classical, will be determined by local interest in the particular language and the wealth of its cultural heritage. Foreign language offerings will, however, vary from one school level to another.

The acceptance of the two differing sets of primary linguistic objectives (pp. 7 and 8) for the classical and the modern foreign languages is a major factor in determining the order of foreign language offerings at particular grade levels. As a general principle, foreign language learning

which achieves objectives of hearing and speaking involves the acquisition of habits of direct comprehension and expression without resort to translation. Such learning should precede the study of any language which emphasizes translation and whose primary purpose is to attain objectives of reading and writing. For this reason, foreign languages, taught audio-lingually, should be offered at an earlier grade level (preferably at the elementary school) than languages which are taught by translation and synthesis.

In view of the importance of developing well established habits in one language before starting a second, the junior high school should offer continuing classes where elementary school language programs exist. Pupils who are beginning the study of a foreign language at the junior high school level should have an opportunity to study it for at least two consecutive years before they undertake the study of a second language, modern or classical.

In the high school, opportunity should be given to continue any foreign language started in the elementary and junior high schools. The language offerings may be broadened to include any which are justified by local cultural interest. See in Appendix B provisions of State Law (Chapter 71, section 13) regarding offerings under certain conditions. In any case, a program offering a classical and at least one modern foreign language should be made available to all secondary school students.

How May Objectives in Foreign Language Teaching Be Attained?

General Principles of Instruction

Instruction in foreign languages shares much that is common to other instruction. The general principles of teaching and learning need to be observed in devising special instruction in this field. Motivation will vary from pupil to pupil. The intrinsic interest of the study of language as an introduction to a different system of communication should be kept in mind. An overemphasis of foreign languages as "tool subjects" should be avoided since it neglects the motivations deriving from an intellectual and aesthetic appreciation of languages. For some pupils the intercultural understandings to be derived from language study are rewarding and should be started early. Demonstrations of utility and direct application may add to the pupil's motivation. Illustrations of language learnings as contributing to vocational or avocational goals are useful, but should not be overstressed.

How to Attain Linguistic Objectives

In classical languages, the study usually develops habits of reading, writing, listening comprehension, and speaking authentic language, in that order. Correct pronunciation should underscore all reading aloud. Some teachers of the classics may well want to give more emphasis to

hearing and speaking than to reading and writing, and should be free to approach the teaching of classics with varying degrees of stress on the several areas of instruction. In this case, oral-choral, as well as individual oral work, is recommended. In the classical languages, regardless of approach, ample opportunity should be provided for reading, writing, and language analysis.

In modern foreign languages, the skills in the initial stages should be developed in this order: hearing, speaking, reading, and writing. The language presented for the pupil's imitation and use should be acceptable to natives as normal cultured usage. The sounds of the language should be in complete meaningful utterances. Use of English by the pupil or teacher should be kept to a minimum. Oral practice material should be based on what has been already heard by the pupil, and reading material on what has been heard and repeated. The pupil should be asked to write only what he has already read in the foreign language. Language should be presented through a study of structural patterns under the guidance of the teacher. Grammatical generalizations should be arrived at inductively only after the student has oral control of the material.

How to Attain Cultural Objectives

The pupil must be given opportunity to develop an understanding of the cultural patterns of the country with the interpretation given them by members of the culture.

Very useful in creating a cultural atmosphere in the classroom are well-chosen realia characteristic of the country concerned such as pictures, books, magazines, maps, posters, coins, stamps, art objects, clothing, etc.; also, carefully selected authentic recordings, films, filmstrips, slides and tapes properly integrated with the language curriculum.

Significant cultural items, both linguistic and non-linguistic, should receive attention as they are met in the class readings. In the initial stages, the cultural content will center about the personal contribution of the teacher. Later, native speakers may be brought into the classroom or recordings by a native on tape or disc may be purchased or made.

Literature should be chosen which exemplifies the literary aspirations of the best writers of the country. This reading should be in the original, unadapted and uncontrived. It should present material of increasing difficulty which is consistent with the intellectual maturity and linguistic knowledge of the student.

The literary text should serve as a point of departure for discussions and/or leading questions in the foreign language which will lead to an intellectual comprehension and an aesthetic appreciation of the text. In order to achieve the latter the student should be able to give brief but pertinent information on the historical and literary background of the writer and his work. He should be able to make a general statement summarizing the content along the lines of the "who, what, when, where,

how" approach. He should be able to show the progression of character, thought and action in the text and make comments on its style, imagery, versification (i.e. poetry), etc. Finally, he should be able, through the knowledge acquired, to explain the significance or importance of the text read and judge the over-all performance of the writer.

The literary text may also serve as a point of departure for the future development and refinement of the linguistic skills, for the one cannot be present without the other. It is at an advanced level only, that translation may serve as a valuable exercise to make the student aware of the linguistic, aesthetic and cultural values implicit in the foreign language and English.

How to Use the Language Laboratory

The primary function of the language laboratory is to provide an opportunity for the student to develop aural-oral skills by maximum practice in listening comprehension and oral use of basic speech patterns until there is automatic response. There must be a direct correlation, both in form and content, between the activities in the classroom and in the language laboratory.

To reinforce lingually this automatic response to the structures being used in the laboratory, a good taped exercise will be brief, having only one teaching point, demand constant creative effort from the student, provide immediate correction and have only one possible answer per item.

The following points are very important:

1. At all stages, listening and repeating should always precede recording and playback;
2. The student should have a laboratory period at least twice a week, more often if possible. However, this period need not be very long (30 minutes at high school level) for there is fatigue in repetition;
3. What the student does in the laboratory must supplement what he is expected to do in the classroom.

A Note to the Teacher

In the interest of achieving a high level of language instruction, the alert teacher is urged to avail himself of every opportunity to enhance his competence. Whenever possible, he should travel in the country whose language he teaches; he should participate in programs such as those offered by language workshops and institutes. Although the direct application of research findings is often difficult, it is the responsibility of the teacher to keep informed about important developments through which he will become aware of possibilities of new techniques and trends. This can best be accomplished through his active participation

in language organizations and the reading of current professional literature.

A Note to the Administrator

While the teacher, the specialist in the foreign language field, is the key to the educational experience of the child, it is the administrator who must see clearly the total program of studies and provide time in the schedule for foreign language work, for suitable groupings of students, for adequate physical space, and for materials and equipment.

Since school situations vary greatly, it would be rash to imply that there is any one solution to such administrative problems, but the following suggestions may be helpful:

1. The study of foreign languages should be seen as part of the over-all language development of the student, as an integrated part of his growth in the understanding and use of language. Time devoted to foreign language then is not taken from his study of English but is time used for study in another area of the language field and which then aids his mastery of his native tongue.
2. Attention is called to experimentation being carried on in some of our secondary schools in the use of class periods of various lengths, e.g. periods of thirty, sixty, and ninety minutes. Such divisions of the school day may facilitate the daily scheduling of foreign language classes and the frequent scheduling of laboratory practice where facilities are limited.
3. The principle of grouping according to level of achievement and interest should be applied more specifically to foreign languages. The same pupil may be at rather different levels of achievement in his various studies and have greater or less interest in them. It is suggested that learning will be encouraged by scheduling each pupil so far as possible, within given local limitations, to the most suitable group in each of his subjects.
4. If the study of foreign languages is begun earlier, it should be expected that differences in pupil achievement levels will be manifested earlier. If, for example, a foreign language is studied in elementary school, then a grouping policy would be desirable in the junior high school as well as in the senior high school.
5. The classroom for foreign language study should as far as possible be designed for teaching the subject under optimum conditions. The teacher should be free from noise and interruptions, and the classroom acoustically suitable for the use of audio-visual materials. Language-learning equipment, or language laboratory equipment, should be installed in spaces which permit possible future expansion, adequate teacher supervision, and integration with classroom work.

APPENDIX A

The following statement was prepared by the Steering Committee[1] of the Foreign Language Program of the Modern Language Association of America in 1955 and was subsequently endorsed for publication by the MLA Executive Council, by the Modern Language Committee of the Secondary Education Board, by the Committee on the Language Program of the American Council of Learned Societies, and by the executive boards or councils of the following national and regional organizations: National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, American Association of Teachers of French, American Association of Teachers of German, American Association of Teachers of Italian, American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, American Association of Teachers of Slavic and Eastern European Languages, Central States Modern Language Teachers Association, Middle States Association of Modern Language Teachers, New England Modern Language Association, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Northwest Conference on Foreign Language Teaching, Philological Association of the Pacific Coast, Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association, South Atlantic Modern Language Association, and South-Central Modern Language Association:

"Qualifications for Secondary School Teachers of Modern Foreign Languages

It is vitally important that teachers of modern foreign languages be adequately prepared for a task which more and more Americans are declaring essential to the national welfare. Though a majority of the language teachers in our schools are well trained, many have been poorly or inadequately prepared, often through no fault of their own. The undersigned therefore present this statement of what they consider the minimal, good, and superior qualifications of a secondary school teacher of a modern foreign language.

We regret that the minimum here stated *cannot yet* include real proficiency in the foreign tongue or more than a superficial knowledge of the foreign culture. It must be clearly understood that teaching by persons who cannot meet this minimal standard will not produce results which our profession can endorse as making the distinctive contribution of language learning to American Life in the second half of the twentieth century.

Our lowest level of preparation is not recommended. It is here stated only as a point of departure which carries with it the responsibility for continued study and self-improvement, through graduate and in-service training, toward the levels of the good and superior preparation.

Those who subscribe to this statement hope that the teacher of foreign languages (1) will have the personal qualities which make an effective teacher, (2) has received a well-balanced education, including a knowledge of our own American culture, and (3) has received the appropriate training in professional education, psychology, and secondary school methods. It is not our purpose to define further these criteria. We are concerned here with the specific criteria for a teacher of modern foreign languages.

---

[1]Theodore Andersson, Associate Professor of French and Associate Director, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Yale University; Josephine R. Bruno, Head, Department of Modern Foreign Languages, Medford (Massachusetts) High School, representing the American Association of Teachers of Italian; Stephen A. Freeman, Vice President of Middlebury College, Director of the Middlebury Summer Language Schools, President of the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations; Renee J. Fulton, Administrative Assistant, Bureau of Curriculum Research, New York City Board of Education, representing the American Association of Teachers of French; Claude P. Lemieux, Professor of Russian, U. S. Naval Academy, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages and representing this Association; Albert H. Marckwardt, Professor of English, University of Michigan, member of the Committee on the Language Program of the American Council of Learned Societies; Bayard Q. Morgan, Professor Emeritus of German, Stanford University, former editor of the *Modern Language Journal*; Werner Neuse, Professor of German and Director of the German School, Middlebury College, President of the American Association of Teachers of German and representing this Association; Howard Lee Nostrand, Professor and Executive Officer of Romance Languages, University of Washington, Donald D. Walsh, Head of the Spanish Department, The Choate School, editor of *Hispania*, representing the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.

1. Aural Understanding

Minimal—The ability to get the sense of what an educated native says when he is enunciating carefully and speaking simply on a general subject.

Good—The ability to understand conversation at average tempo, lectures, and news broadcasts.

Superior—The ability to follow closely and with ease all types of standard speech, such as rapid or group conversation, plays and movies.

Test—These abilities can be tested by dictation, by the Listening Comprehension Tests of the College Entrance Examination Board—thus far developed for French, German, and Spanish—or by similar tests for these and other languages, with an extension in range and difficulty for the superior level.

2. Speaking

Minimal—The ability to talk on prepared topics (e.g., for classroom situations) without obvious faltering, and to use the common expressions needed for getting around in the foreign country, speaking with a pronunciation readily understandable to a native.

Good—The ability to talk with a native without making glaring mistakes, and with a command of vocabulary and syntax sufficient to express one's thoughts in sustained conversation. This implies speech at normal speed with good pronunciation and intonation.

Superior—The ability to approximate native speech in vocabulary, intonation, and pronunciation (e.g., the ability to exchange ideas and to be at ease in social situations).

Test—For the present, this ability has to be tested by interview or by a recorded set of questions with a blank disc or tape for recording answers.

3. Reading

Minimal—The ability to grasp directly (i.e., without translating) the meaning of simple, non-technical prose, except for an occasional word.

Good—The ability to read with immediate comprehension prose and verse of average difficulty and mature content.

Superior—The ability to read, almost as easily as in English, material of considerable difficulty, such as essays and literary criticism.

Test—These abilities can be tested by a graded series of timed reading passages, with comprehension questions and multiple-choice or free-response answers.

4. Writing

Minimal—The ability to write correctly sentences or paragraphs such as would be developed orally for classroom situations, and the ability to write a short, simple letter.

Good—The ability to write a simple "free composition" with clarity and correctness in vocabulary, idiom, and syntax.

Superior—The ability to write on a variety of subjects with idiomatic naturalness, ease of expression, and some feeling for the style of the language.

Test—These abilities can be tested by multiple-choice syntax items, dictations, translation of English sentences or paragraphs, and a controlled letter or free composition.

5. Language Analysis

Minimal—A working command of the sound patterns and grammar patterns of the foreign language, and a knowledge of its main differences from English.

Good—A basic knowledge of the historical development and present characteristics of the language, and an awareness of the difference between the language as spoken and as written.

Superior—Ability to apply knowledge of descriptive, comparative, and historical linguistics to the language-teaching situation.

Test—Such information and insight can be tested for levels 1 and 2 by multiple-choice and free response items on pronunciation, intonation patterns, and syntax; for levels 2 and 3, items on philology and descriptive linguistics.

6. Culture

Minimal—An awareness of language as an essential element among the learned and shared experiences that combine to form a particular culture, and a rudimentary knowledge of the geography, history, literature, art, social customs, and contemporary civilization of the foreign people.

Good—Firsthand knowledge of some literary masterpieces, an understanding of the principal ways in which the foreign culture resembles and differs from our own, and possession of an organized body of information on the foreign people and their civilization.

Superior—An enlightened understanding of the foreign people and their culture, achieved through personal contact, preferably by travel and residence abroad, through study of systematic description of the foreign culture, and through study of literature and the arts.

Test—Such information and insight can be tested by multiple-choice literary and cultural acquaintance tests for levels 1 and 2; for level 3, written comments on passages of prose or poetry that discuss or reveal significant aspects of the foreign culture.

7. Professional Preparation

Note the final paragraph of the prefatory statement of this Appendix (p. 14).

Minimal—Some knowledge of effective methods and techniques of language teaching.

Good—The ability to apply knowledge of methods and techniques to the teaching situation (e.g., audio-visual techniques) and to relate one's teaching of the language to other areas of the curriculum.

Superior—A mastery of recognized teaching methods, and the ability to experiment with and evaluate new methods and techniques.

Test—Such knowledge and ability can be tested by multi-choice answers to questions on pedagogy and language-teaching methods, plus written comment on language-teaching situations."

APPENDIX B

Excerpts from the General Laws Relating to Education
Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1956

Chapter 71

Section 13. Commercial Spanish in high schools. In every public high school having not less than one hundred and fifty pupils and offering a commercial course of study, commercial Spanish shall be taught upon the written request of parents or guardians of not less than twenty pupils and the enrollment of not less than twenty properly qualified pupils, provided said request is made, and said enrollment is completed, before the preceding August first.

Section 13A. Italian language to be taught under certain conditions (Enacted 1938, 241). In every public high school having not less than one hundred and fifty pupils, the Italian language shall be taught upon the written request of the parents or guardians of not less than fifteen pupils, and the enrollment of not less than twenty-five properly qualified pupils, provided said request is made, and said enrollment is completed, before the preceding August first.

Section 13B. Any modern language may be taught under certain conditions (Enacted 1939, 311). In every public high school having not less than one hundred and fifty pupils, any modern language, not included in the regular curriculum and not taught as provided by either of the two preceding sections, may be taught if the parents or guardians of not less than twenty-five pupils request in writing the teaching thereof and if there is an enrollment of not less than twenty-five properly qualified pupils; provided, that said request is made, and said enrollment is completed, before the preceding August first. The teaching of any language as provided by this section, may be discontinued if the enrollment of pupils therefore falls below fifteen.

Section 13C. Polish language to be taught under certain conditions (Enacted 1945, 402). In every public high school having not less than one hundred and fifty pupils, the Polish language shall be taught upon the written request of the parents or guardians of not less than twenty-five pupils and the enrollment of not less than twenty-five properly qualified pupils; provided, that said request is made, and said enrollment is completed, before the preceding August first.

Section 13E. Lithuanian language is to be taught under certain conditions (Enacted 1949, 99). In every public high school having not less than one hundred and fifty pupils, the Lithuanian language shall be taught upon the written request of the parents or guardians of not less than twenty-five pupils and the enrollment of not less than twenty-five properly qualified pupils; provided, that said request is made, and said enrollment is completed, before the preceding August first.

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2. *The Classical World* (formerly *The Classical Weekly*)

   (Published by the Classical Association of the Atlantic States. Ed. Edward A. Robinson, Fordham University, Bronx 58, N. Y. Subscription: $3.75.)

3. *The Modern Language Journal*

   (Published by the National Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations. Business Manager: Stephen L. Pitcher, 7144 Washington Avenue, St. Louis 30, Mo. See especially annual *Annotated Bibliography of Modern Language Methodology,* compiled by Evelyn Van Enenaam. Subscription: $4.00.)

4. *The French Review*

   (Published by the American Association of Teachers of French. Secretary-Treasurer: George B. Watts, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina. Subscription: $5.00.)

5. *Hispania: A Teachers' Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese.*

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8. *The Slavic and East European Journal*

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